



## **Omagh remembers worst atrocity of the Troubles**

Hundreds of people gathered in Market Street in Omagh, on Wednesday afternoon, for a commemoration service organised by the town's churches to commemorate the

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20th anniversary of the single worst atrocity of ‘the Troubles’.

Twenty-nine people and two unborn children lost their lives after a bomb left by the Real IRA exploded in Market Street, in the town centre, 20 years ago today. The device went off at the precise spot where today’s service took place.

The service was arranged by the Churches’ Forum in Omagh, whose co-chairman are the Rector of Drumragh with Mountfield, Rev Ian Linton, and the Parish Priest of Omagh, Fr Eugene Hasson.

The two church leaders were joined by the Minister of Trinity Presbyterian Church in Omagh, Rev Robert Herron OBE; the Minister of Omagh Methodist Church, Rev Eleanor Hayden; and the Parish Priest of Drumquin, Father Kevin Mullan.

Two members of the congregation at St Columba’s Church of Ireland – organist Derrick Weir and chorister Laura Fall – led singing of the hymn ‘Be Not Afraid’.

Two men took turns to knell a bell – 32 single tolls, one for each victim of the Omagh bombing and one for all victims of violence. The last toll sounded at ten past three, the time when the car bomb exploded twenty years ago.

Former RUC officer Richard Scott, who assisted many of the casualties of the Omagh bombing, read a poem during the service and laid a wreath in a local alleyway where many of the injured and dying were carried 20 years earlier.

A ripple of applause greeted the end of the service. As they dispersed, the hundreds present were invited to take white rose petals from baskets that were handed round the crowd

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and scatter them in the nearby memorial garden or the adjoining River Strule, in a gesture symbolising peace and hope for the future.

## **'Staggering' that Pope may not meet abuse victims, says protest organiser**



The announcement that Pope Francis may not meet victims of church sexual abuse in Ireland has pushed one victim to organise a demonstration during his visit to Dublin.

Colm O'Gorman said: "It is staggering on the part of the Vatican, they can't even be bothered to go through the motions of making it appear that this matters to them.

"It's become a trope, he goes to a country and has a confidential meeting and releases a statement about how moved he was by victim testimony, expresses sorrow and regret and we move on.

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"I'm not sure that meeting would've had any value anyway, but the idea that it's an afterthought, that is utterly unacceptable."

Mr O'Gorman was repeatedly raped by a local priest in Co Wexford for three years, beginning just a year after Pope John Paul II's visit to Ireland in 1979, when he was 13.

He said: "When I heard Pope John Paul's quote: 'Young people of Ireland, I love you', it sickened me, he didn't.

"It's important that all that has happened here over decades isn't just swept aside of convenience of the Vatican.

"I respect people's desire to have faith, I would never deny people their opportunity to profess their faith, but it cannot be at the cost of people all over the country struggling with the hurt and the trauma the church has caused."

The event, to be held in the Garden of Remembrance on Sunday 26th August at 3pm, invites anyone who has been hurt by the church, and those who support them, to attend.

"The response I have had has been extraordinary, so many people have come to me to tell me their stories, they need a space to name the fact," Mr O'Gorman added.

"I'm being contacted by people who have never spoken out, and the visit is really affecting them.

"They are feeling silenced again by the hype of this whole visit.



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"I know people who couldn't cope, who couldn't survive, and ended their life because of their abuse, I knew I had to do something."



Mr O'Gorman added that although Pope Francis may be viewed as a more liberal and modern pope than his predecessors, his record on abuse is stark.

"I like and admire many of the things that Francis has to say on poverty, social inclusion and refugees, however I think some of it is overstated.

"On abuse issues he has been shocking."

Mr O'Gorman points to Pope Francis's appointment of Cardinal Pell to the third most powerful position in the Vatican and his comments on abuse victims in Chile.

Cardinal Pell is the highest-ranking Catholic official in the world to have faced trial over historical sexual offence allegations.

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Mr O'Gorman said: "His visit to Chile last year unmasked how similar Francis is to other popes.

"He attacked abuse victims of causing scandal to the church, and only later apologised due to global outrage.

"This is why those who have the capacity to stand up and speak out, because if we don't it reinforces their dismissal of the abuse and our experiences," he said.

Another protest against the Papal Mass took the form of the Say Nope to the Pope campaign.

Organisers encouraged those who objected to the visit to apply for the free tickets to the Phoenix Park Mass and not attend, saying it was "a sign of peaceful and silent protest against the church and its crimes".

More than 5,000 people have shown support for the protest on social media.

## **Future of parish life subject of two-day conference hosted by Mary Immaculate College, Thurles**

As vocations to priesthood 'plummet', major challenges facing parish life are to be discussed at a groundbreaking two-day conference, hosted by Mary Immaculate College at their campus in Thurles, the Limerick Leader reports.



### **Rev Eamonn Fitzgibbon of MIC**

The event is aiming to bring parishioners, clergy and theologians together, to explore important pastoral issues confronting the Church in Ireland, according to Rev. Dr Éamonn Fitzgibbon, director of the Irish Institute of Pastoral Studies at MIC.

“In Ireland it is quite clear that the dynamic of the parish is changing dramatically,” Rev Fitzgibbon said.

“A seismic shift has been occurring as vocations to priesthood and religious life have plummeted, with the result that the forms of pastoral ministry and parish life that were such staples of the Catholic Church in Ireland for generations will no longer be possible.”

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“How the parishes are run and managed is a major challenge for the Church authorities and for the laity as they bid to chart a way forward,” he added.

While Ireland is in the middle of this transition, other countries have already been through this process, according to Rev Fitzgibbon who believes that the Church here can learn from these experiences by studying how other parishes, communities and dioceses coped when faced with similar challenges.

The conference will feature Cardinal John Dew, Archbishop of Wellington and Vice President of New Zealand’s Catholic Bishops Conference as its keynote speaker, with other speakers including Bishop Michael Wustenberg, who will speak about his experience as a bishop in South Africa, and Fr Matthew Nunes from the Archdiocese of Liverpool.

Dr Margaret Lavin, Professor Emerita at the University of Toronto, will also speak on the role of the clergy and laity in the Catholic Church.

Guest speakers will also be joined by Martin Kennedy, a freelance trainer and facilitator who works with Church and community groups and Dr Jessie Rogers who lectures in Scripture at the Pontifical University, St Patrick's College Maynooth.

The conference is aiming for interaction to be two-way and all-inclusive, according to Rev Fitzgibbon. The Future of the Irish Parish takes place at MIC St Patrick’s Campus Thurles on Tuesday and Wednesday, August 28 and 29. More info on (0504) 20590 or see [www.irishinstituteforpastoralstudies.com](http://www.irishinstituteforpastoralstudies.com)



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## Death of Mothers' Union Ireland ally on gender issues at United Nations



The death has taken place in New York of a colleague of Mothers' Union Ireland who helped to organise delegations from the wider Anglican Communion to the annual UN Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW) meetings in New York.

Colleagues and supporters have paid tribute to a leading campaigner for gender justice within the Anglican Communion, Beth Adamson-Strauss (Photo above). Beth Adamson, as she was known, a Methodist who worked as a volunteer for the US-based Episcopal Church, died on

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Sunday in hospital where she was receiving treatment for serious injuries caused by an accident two weeks earlier.

For several years she had led the Episcopal Church's campaigning on gender justice issues at the United Nations; and helped to organise delegations from both the US-based Church and the wider Anglican Communion to the annual UN Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW) meetings in New York.

“Beth has touched so many people with her passion, determination, wisdom and joyful heart,” Canon Terrie Robinson, the Anglican Communion's Director for Women in Church and Society, said. “Through her faith-filled and tireless work at the UN and with Anglican delegations to UNCSW, there are women and girls the world over who have been inspired and energised by her to be strong champions for gender equality, even in the most difficult circumstances.”

## **Jesuits gift Dublin buildings to be converted to social housing**

Three large Victorian buildings in Dublin's north inner city, which have housed the Pioneer Association, the Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice and the first premises of [Peter McVerry Trust](#), are to be turned into homes for people leaving emergency accommodation, the Irish Times reports.

The Jesuit order, which owns 26, 27 and 28 Sherrard Street Upper, just off Gardiner Street, has agreed to sign all three buildings over to the Peter McVerry Trust, subject to the

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approval of the Charities Regulator, for use as social housing.

The terrace of three-storey over-basement houses, which date from about 1880, were built as homes but have been in institutional use for most of the past century. No 27 was the headquarters of the [Pioneer Total Abstinence Association](#), since 1944, until its recent move to smaller premises in [Marino](#). No 26 and No 28 housed various Jesuit organisations. The basement of No 26 was used by Fr Peter McVerry as a drop-in centre for homeless young people for more than 30 years.

*While this will go just a small way to addressing the crisis, we will be able to provide accommodation for a mix of people who are most in need*

All the buildings, apart from 28, which still houses some of the trust's administrative offices, are now vacant. Once approval is secured from the charities regulator, the trust plans to convert them into 16 apartments.

“The pressing need for housing, particularly social housing, is on the front page of the papers most days of the week,” trust chief executive [Pat Doyle](#) said. “While this will go just a small way to addressing the crisis, we will be able to provide accommodation for a mix of people who are most in need.”

## **Mix of tenants**

Two of the apartments will be set aside for young people leaving care, two will go to people “straight from the



**The Moderator of the Presbyterian Church is currently visiting the work of the Bible Society in Jordan**

streets”, Mr Doyle said, while the rest will be a mix of singles, couples and possibly small families living in hostel or other emergency accommodation.

“This will take them out of homelessness for good. They will be tenants and the label of homelessness will be removed from them. I’m delighted that the Jesuit Community of [Ireland](#) see this as a very apt and fitting legacy for these properties.”

*We will go up any cul-de-sac if there’s even a half chance of a home at the end of it*



The trust will get the buildings free of charge but expects to spend in the region of €1.6 million on conversion and renovation works. “The buildings have been valued at about €3 million, so its a hugely generous gift from the Jesuits,” Mr Doyle said.

While the buildings have been continuously occupied and are in relatively good condition, with many intact original features including fireplaces, and ornate cornicing and ceiling roses, their conversion into apartments will require substantial work. However, Mr Doyle said the trust had long experience in dealing with the reuse of older buildings.

“We will go up any cul-de-sac if there’s even a half chance of a home at the end of it.”

The trust intends to seek planning permission later this year with a view to completing work before Christmas 2019. Later this month the trust will hold a week-long exhibition at the Irish Architecture Foundation on Bachelors Walk, showcasing its work in reusing buildings.

## **Youth Link NI Outreach and Detached Youth Work Training**

Youth Link states - Our outreach and detached training aims to provide you with the knowledge, skills and understanding to make a real impact in your community. Many young people do not attend existing youth provision and by developing skills in the process of building purposeful relationships in a street-based setting you can



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have the chance to make contact with young people that traditional youth clubs do not.

Do you want to get out there and meet people where they are at? Do you want the opportunity to reach the hardest to reach young people in your community? Do you want the skills to get out on the streets and make meaningful connections? Do you have a heart for your community and the young people in it?

The course will have a specific focus on how we bring the good news of Jesus Christ in a practical and effective way.

Topics covered include:

- Understanding the process
- Health and Safety
- Risk assessment
- Developing the work
- Community mapping
- Games and activities/ what to bring
- Recording and reflection
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Lunch will be provided, places are limited so please book now to avoid disappointment.

[Click here to book your place](#)

NOTE: This training is for volunteers and staff working on the Youth Led Transformations Project. If you are not part of this project and are still interested in the training please do get in touch with Jim ([jim@youthlink.org.uk](mailto:jim@youthlink.org.uk)) or 02890323217.

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Participants must be over 16. Those under 18 must be accompanied by an adult.

This workshop is funded by the Education Authority.



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